# VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2014-9:00 AM-3:00 PM

VRS WOODBURY OFFICE / HUDSON CONFERENCE ROOM

## **SESSION NOTES:**

## **Committee Objective**

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

**2014 Community Partner Members** (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Jeremy Gurney, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, and Robert Reedy

VRS Members: Jay Hancock, Becky Johnson, Lori Thorpe, and Kris Tone

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2014 Schedule: Jan 24, Mar 28, Apr 25, Jun 27, Sep 26, Oct 24, and Dec 5.

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# January 24, 2014 Session Objectives:

- ★ Welcome and introduction of new advisory committee members
- ★ Review of 2013 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter for relevant 2014 updates
- \* Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers
- ★ Discussion on the topic of DHS Rule 11 background checks
- ★ Facilitate advisory dialogue on strategic topics for committee consideration in 2014

January 24 2014 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Jeremy Gurney, Jay Hancock, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Jan Thompson, Lori Thorpe, Dee Torgerson, and Kris Tone

Not in attendance: Robert Reedy

Guest presenters: David Fullerton, Marci Jasper

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

# **Agenda Topics:**

- 1. Welcome / Overview
- 2. Charting Our Course
  - Review and updating of 2013 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter for 2014
- 3. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
- 4. Strategic Dialogue: DHS Rule 11 Background Checks
- 5. 2014 CRP Advisory Topics and Calendar
- 6. Wrap Up/Adjourn

## **Meeting Highlights:**

- The committee welcomed new CRP members who began their three year terms.
- The committee discussed the complexities and benefits of DHS Rule 11 background checks in assisting jobseekers and employers.
- The committee developed a list of potential strategic dialogue topics for 2014.

## **Next Steps:**

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- **REVIEW OF 2013 CHARTER FOR 2014 ADOPTION:** Committee members will review and email any proposed edits for the 2014 charter to the facilitator. The charter will be reviewed for 2014 adoption at the March 28<sup>th</sup> committee meeting.
- MARCH VR COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY: Josh Howie will provide the March story.
- NEXT MEETING: Next meeting is Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>.

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## **Welcome and Opening**

The committee approved the December 6, 2013 session notes.

The committee leaders welcomed seven new members to the 2014 VRS CRP Advisory Committee as follows:

- 1. Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Goodwill Easter Seals (Metro Region)
- 2. Jeremy Gurney, Opportunity Services (Southern Region)
- 3. Josh Howie, Trillium Works! (Northern Region)
- 4. Jay Hancock, VRS South/Central Regional Manager
- 5. Robert Reedy, RISE, Incorporated (Metro Region)
- 6. Lori Thorpe, VRS RAM-Cambridge (Northern Region)
- 7. Kris Tone, VRS RAM-Willmar (Southern Region)

The new cohort has been selected for the membership term of 2014-2016. With 12 CRP representatives on the committee, there are three cohorts of four representatives each. Each cohort serves a three year term in a staggered progression in order to balance new membership with committee continuity over time. There is one VRS RAM representative from each region on the committee. RAM appointments are also staggered to balance membership continuity over time.

# **Charting Our Course**

Committee facilitator Holly Johnson reviewed the components of the 2013 VRS CRP Advisory Committee charter as groundwork for the annual review and 2014 update process. The charter provides a concise description of the committee's purpose along with key elements including membership, scope, team process guidelines, roles, communication plan and external dependencies. Each year the committee is asked to review their charter and make any relevant updates and edits prior to signifying their commitment for the year through signatures to the approved charter.

Holly asked that committee members review the entire charter and provide any suggested edits to her prior to the next meeting. Members will review a draft 2014 charter at the March meeting with a goal of finalizing of the charter content and securing 2014 membership commitment signatures.

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# **Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics**

## CRP updates:

- Dan Meyers
  - Armando Camacho, new CEO of Opportunity Partners started January 13<sup>th</sup>.
     He was most recently President of Neighborhood House, a St. Paul nonprofit resource center serving immigrants and the poor.
  - Achieved 147 placements in 2013 best ever! Attribute success to a number of factors including stable staff, improving economy, and Minneapolis Placement Partnership lead sharing.
  - Active REDI Walgreens programs in Bloomington and St Paul.
- Becky Bazarre
  - Lifetrack Resources 101 placements goal for 2013 and hit 159 placements attributed to similar factors to Opportunity Partners list plus some placements from local North Metro Placement Partnership.
- Gil Bessard
  - Two Tasks Unlimited staff taking Placement 101 training
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
  - Goodwill Easter Seals just wrapped up our first IPS Fidelity review and will start entering numbers to Dartmouth
  - FAST program (IPS working with MFIP population) also had their IPS review
  - New location in Uptown (Sons of Norway 3rd floor location) in December 2013. Additional space at St Paul location secured.
- Jeremy Gurney
  - Opportunity Services is excited to be part of the EE community grants in Olmstead County
  - They have made the decision to become self funded in their medical insurance which has been a big change. Also undergoing revamping of administrative structure and plans.
- Laura Bealey
  - MRCI Mankato continues to be immersed in 245D. Intense effort.
  - Working on IPS transformation grant and continuing related learning.
  - Candy business is 'Quality Sweets' and hoping to break even. On track to produce \$10-12M bags of candy serving Menards, Holiday, and Target stores.
  - o 3,300 square feet DTNH building in Mankato industrial area.
  - Visit from Senator Amy Klobuchar planned on January 31st. Tim Walz and Cathy Sharon, local legislators have already visited.
  - Doubling this summer's Transition Youth training from two to four training sessions.
  - Laura has been working with local Quik Trip Convenience Store locations regarding employment opportunities. 6 placements in Mankato stores. Jay

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Hancock and Roberta Johnson are providing a Single Point of Contact for VR. QuikTrip currently employs over 10,000 people and is planning to expand another 100 stores in Minnesota over the next few years. \$8.25 local store wages.

## Rachel Praught

- Functional Industries is also immersed into 245D
- Finished IPS review
- Expanding our IPS Transformation grant to include new, expanded project supporting ASD population
- CARF review coming
- Expanding our school to work program and elevating our work with VRS St Cloud office

## Heather Deutschlaender

 ProAct launched the Walgreens REDI program on January 6<sup>th</sup> in an Eagan store located on Cliff Road. Offers to all three applicants and recommending hiring of two individuals. Training in the photo center is being added for one of the trainees.

#### Julie Peterschick

- Productive Alternatives fall CARF review went well
- 245D and rate restructuring is a challenge especially given that we work with many, many counties.
- Alexandria office is transitioning to IPS model and working with Steve Brink and Transem to expand capacity and quality of services
- Fergus Falls location is working to transition from an in-house program to something else. Currently manufacturing a number of products and trying to identify the best place for everybody involved (approximately 80 consumers that would be impacted in some form)
- Need more staff and in the hiring mode... Alexandria and Little Falls openings.

## Steve Brink

- TranSem has their Fidelity review is next week.
- IPS Transformation in Otter Tail county. Working with Julie Peterschick and Productive Alternatives in cooperative efforts in working with the same mental health provider. Also working with the counties.
- Set percentage goals 50% goal fidelity; 58% achieved. A little over 2% unemployment in our area.

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# ❖ DEED/VRS updates:

- Chris McVey, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships gave an update on the VRS efforts to support the existing and new IPS projects in Minnesota. Claire Courtney, VRS' Senior Rehabilitation Program Consultant in Mental Health as well as Melinda Shamp, from DHS-Mental Health have been providing two day trainings across the state for all new IPS projects including VRS, CRP and Mental Health partners staff. Additionally, VRS is supporting VRS counselors serving IPS projects by offering a monthly statewide learning collaborative. Similarly, VRS plans to offer a statewide learning collaborative for RAMs & Sup II's supporting IPS counselors and projects.
- Kim Peck on VRS and DEED Updates:
  - Federal level is monitoring proposed legislative activity on reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act. Current proposed content changes include moving VRS's federal governing body Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) from the Department of Education (DOE) to the Department of Labor (DOL) as well as increasing the public VR program's requirements for serving Transition Youth. The proposed legislation is expected to move through the Senate Working Committee with efforts focused on reconciling the U.S. Senate Bill 1356 Workforce Investment Act 2013 and the U.S. House of Representative's proposed Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act (H.R. 803).
  - With no federal appropriation made yet VRS is operating on a flat budget assumption in the interim. Currently all service categories are closed with exception of Service Category One. Approximately 60% of those we serve are in Category One. At some point the closed categories will impact referrals as waiting lists grow.
  - 3. VRS is hoping to secure federal re-allotment dollars in September if excess dollars are available to be redistributed.
  - 4. Olmstead Plan update: Minnesota's Extended Employment program currently has an existing liability on investment in center based services. Judge Donovan Frank has approved the Minnesota Olmstead Plan as recommended by the court monitor with the understanding that the plan will be revised to provide more specificity on what will be done with existing DT&H models. The Subcabinet is responsible for developing the overall plan and will make recommendations to appropriate subcommittees as needed. The revised Plan must be submitted to the Court by early July 2014.
  - 5. This is a non-budget year at the state legislature. We are expecting a supplemental budget and VRS is hoping that funds will be requested and secured to fund the Olmstead Plan Office. VRS is currently providing funding in the interim.

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# \* Committee member Heather Deutschlaender provided the January community partnership success story:

O Heather shared the story of a client who struggled for many years living in a gang riddled environment where he witnessed his brother being shot. He came to Pro Act Inc. on a referral from VRS for an assessment and was placed in his first job within about two weeks. However when things didn't work out with the first job, the team took another shot at it and together found the perfect job for him at the Minneapolis-St Paul International Airport where he drives a wheelchair cart. He loves the all of the interactions and opportunities to help people his job offers and has even turned down supervisory positions saying he wants to continue work directly with people and stay where he is!

# Advisory Committee Dialogue: DHS Rule 11 Background Checks

VRS Director Chris McVey introduced the committee to guest presenters VRS Program Specialist Marci Jasper and VRS Career Rehabilitation Counselor David Fullerton to provide the foundation for a discussion on the topic of DHS Rule 11 background checks. VRS is focusing on sharing information and gathering feedback on next steps to help establish staff guidance on appropriate request for, and use of, background checks as it relates to helping consumers find and retain employment.

As a counselor for over 12 years, David saw a growing need about six years ago to help ex-offender consumers that were coming in for help to secure and retain competitive employment. In the VRS North Minneapolis office, approximately 50 to 60% of consumers are ex-offenders. We know there are unique challenges related to securing and retaining employment for these consumers. David earned his Offender Employment Specialist (OES) certification to gain greater knowledge and is a member of the Minnesota Community Corrections Association (MCCA). Over the years, he and Marci have worked to help VRS staff to understand and assist both consumers and employers with background checks. They have been invited to speak and answer questions about the unique needs and services for ex-offenders at various local placement partnerships.

David explained that 'Rule 11' is internal speak for a Department of Human Services (DHS) background check. DHS requires background checks for a wide variety of DHS licensed jobs in health care and human services fields including work in foster care, child care, hospitals and schools. Rule 11 background checks are also required when working with vulnerable adults. Currently VRS policy addresses Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) background checks. VRS cannot access Rule 11 checks because state staff do not directly provide services to vulnerable populations VRS is looking into the potential amendment of VRS policy for implications associated with Rule 11 including the potential of adding Rule 11 background check services to service contracts.

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Question: When do you run a background check?

**Answer:** In general, a counselor will support encouraging a background check where it could impact VRS's ability to support a job goal. Specifically, a Rule 11 background check can be helpful in evaluating the appropriateness of the job goal and/or potential barriers for achieving it. A background check may be appropriate when consumers express interest in applying for a position where required such as a position in health care, schools, hospitals, day cares, child care, foster care, and retail. It's important to remember that sometimes it is not only the position but the actual physical location of the job that may require a background check.

Understanding what is on an individual's record can be helpful to everyone on the jobseeker's team including the jobseeker themselves who may not be aware of what is on the official record. An appropriate background check can be part of due diligence in developing a sound plan. In some environments, conducting background checks as a condition for employment has become part of the 'way we do business' due to public safety issues. Helping VR consumers know and understand any barriers that emerge from background checks earlier in the process is useful for developing effective strategies to help them overcome the barriers that might otherwise prevent them from being hired or worse yet, result in their firing after they have received employment conditional on a clean background check.

The committee also discussed situations where any number of issues known as Preponderance of the Evidence (POE) can still result in denied employment eligibility under Rule 11 even without guilty determination. The DHS 'Rule 11' ratings fall into three categories:

- 1. 'blue' receiving a blue rating indicates an employment eligibility 'go',
- 2. **'yellow'** receiving a yellow rating indicates 'keep on but with limitations while we investigate further/POE'
- 3. 'red' receiving a red rating indicates a 'denied/ineligible' for employment status

Committee members also discussed their experiences around the amount of time it can take to receive the background results which can vary from days to weeks. Most agreed that when the consumer has records to be researched in multiple states, this frequently results in longer processing times.

Background checks are a complex, multi-faceted issue. It is important to carefully consider and balance respect for privacy/client choice with determining employment eligibility. VRS is working hard to help counselors with their role in appropriate consideration of this tool as it supports consumers and employers in successfully matching people with business needs. David and Marci are developing draft language to shape guidance for staff which will be reviewed by VRS Policy Specialist Heather Farmer for incorporation into VRS Policy. As the dialogue concluded, David Fullerton offered to talk to local placement partnerships about ex-offender issues as helpful. He can be reached at 763.279.4356.

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# VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2014 Planning

The facilitator guided the committee through a review of brainstormed potential topics for 2014 strategic dialogue developed at the December 2013 meeting. Committee members affirmed the topics as well as elevated 'Innovation & Expansion' opportunities and added 'Transition Youth' to the list. The refined list is as follows:

## What could we focus on going forward into 2014?

- Innovation & Expansion opportunities other potential VR Community requests similar to Transformation grants for IPS; corporate partnerships; changes coming from Olmstead Plan
- Transition youth... work experiences in the community pay, variety, availability; starting earlier with youth; building partnerships with schools; Special Ed/Tech from Education to help provide information on policies and direction; employer/business relationships and best practices e.g. Maple Grove
- Creating a more standard offering and definition for the DISCOVERY model in Minnesota
- Explore Single Point of Contact approach; in connection with revisiting the local placement partnerships and serving consumers and employers
- Check-in on Next Generation pilot progress and learning; helping to 'work out the kinks' - provide input and feedback on pilots
- Informed Choice concepts for helping consumers access the key information they want/need to make good choices
- Moving forward with business engagement how can we learn more about what employers want/need and assist employers with their integrated employment requirements (March 2014)
- How can we better understand and measure the consumer experience and provider services/quality levels; how do we get real and helpful information from consumers to help us know how we're doing and how we can target efforts and continue to improve
- More about IPS and how it's going... 2014 will be crucial year; increase understanding of what other people are doing; NAMI support infusion and implications; discuss potential for proposals as a community to the legislature given the opportunity for investment
- Ongoing supports... increased needs for these, Extended Employment is just 'one slice', how do we build greater capacity system wide

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#### **KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY**

# Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- As the results for 2013 are being tallied across the state, many organizations are reporting a higher number of placement results for the year... many exceeding their annual goals! This is great news for our consumers and the employers who have new talent contributing to our state's workforce. Our thanks and congratulations to everyone across the state working within and across all the local placement partnerships that helped make every individual consumer's placement come true!
- Background checks are an important and complex issue that requires the vocational rehabilitation community to develop a better understanding of how and when this tool should be used to help consumers secure eligibility for certain employment positions and environments. DHS Rule 11 is a background check required for any DHS licensed services and is being considered as a possible addition to VRS service contracts with CRP/LUV providers.
- Looking forward into 2014, the VRS CRP Advisory Committee is energized to delve deeper into some of the topics we have covered in the past such as ongoing supports, the Olmstead Plan and Informed Choice as well as dig into additional areas of strategic importance such as innovation and expansion, transition youth, business engagement, IPS, single point of contact models, and consumer experience.